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Supply and/or administration of medicine by student nurses and student midwives in relation to Patient Group Directions (PGDs).

Summary

This circular takes place with immediate effect. It sets out the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) position on the supply and/or administration of medicines by students in relation to PGDs. This circular supports and adds clarification to the information contained within the NMC Standards for medicines management (2008). Student nurses and student midwives cannot supply and/or administer medicines under a PGD even if under direct supervision. Registered nurses and midwives cannot delegate the supply and/or administration of medicines under PGD.

This document should be read in conjunction with the NMC documents:

- the Code: standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives (2008)
- Standards for medicines management (2008).
- Introduction of Essential Skills Clusters for Pre-registration Nursing programmes (2007)
- Standards for pre-registration midwifery education, standard 17, Essential skills clusters (2009)

The NMC's statutory responsibilities

The NMC is charged with 'safeguard(ing) the health and wellbeing of persons using or needing the services of registrants'. It does this by 'establish(ing) from time to time standards of education, training, conduct and performance for nurses and midwives to ensure the maintenance of those standards'

Background

The NMC Standards for medicines management provide the benchmark by which practice should be conducted and will be measured. The NMC have received a number of queries regarding the supply and/or administration of medicines against a PGD by students.

Patient Group Directions

PGDs are specific written instructions for the supply and/or administration of a licensed named medicine including vaccines to specific groups of patients who may not be individually identified before presenting for treatment.

The NMC Standards for medicines management state that PGDs should only be used by a nurse or midwife who has been assessed as competent to do so. Names of competent nurses or midwives must be identified against each PGD. The supply and/or administration of medicines via a PGD may not be delegated. Student nurses and student midwives cannot supply and/or administer under a PGD but would be expected to understand the principles and should be involved in the process. The Essential skills clusters for pre-registration nursing and the Standards for pre-registration midwifery education state that student nurses and student midwives should know their responsibilities under law, the application of medicines legislation to practice in relation to PGDs.

Clarification from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority, who hold the legislation on PGDs, confirm it is not permitted for another individual, including student nurses or student midwives under direct supervision, to supply and/or administer medicines under a PGD.

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This circular has been issued by

Kathy George
Chief Executive and Registrar
Nursing & Midwifery Council